

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 23, 2021

Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

As negotiations continue with the Senate and our House Rules Committee prepares the Build Back Better Act for floor consideration, we write to reiterate the importance of permanently closing the Medicaid coverage gap. We appreciate your strong commitment to fulfilling the ACA's promise for the estimated 6 million uninsured Americans who have been denied any of its benefits by a few Republican state leaders. Closing the coverage gap is the most significant step this Congress can take to promote health equity, protect public health, and better secure the health and economic security of these Americans.

The House Ways & Means and House Energy & Commerce Committees included strong policies to correct this wrong for our most vulnerable neighbors. To assure the many benefits, consumer protections, and social services coordination offered by Medicaid, the Energy & Commerce Committee approved legislation to establish federal Medicaid plans operating in the non-expansion states.

Recognizing such a program will take some number of years to establish, the Ways & Means Committee legislation provides immediate relief with zero-premium and deductible, year-long Marketplace coverage. To better meet this vulnerable population's needs, Marketplace coverage would include year-round enrollment opportunities and some additional benefits, including non-emergency medical transportation and family planning services.

Together, the two committees' policies offer a path forward to close the coverage gap. To ensure there are no interruptions in coverage, the Ways & Means Committee included an important sentence providing continuous zero-premium Marketplace coverage until the HHS Secretary certifies the federal Medicaid program is fully implemented and ready to enroll beneficiaries. We draw your attention to this essential one-line provision, which assures there is no coverage cliff should the new federal Medicaid program be for any reason delayed. Economically disadvantaged Americans, who have already been left behind for over a decade, must not again be suddenly left uninsured.

We remain committed to ensuring CMS establishes a federal Medicaid program by the statutory deadline of January 1, 2025, but patients' health security should not be left hanging in the balance. CMS is already overburdened with the enormous work of undoing Trump's sabotage of our health care system and the COVID-19 pandemic. The agency will be implementing several new programs upon passage of the Build Back Better Act, increasing the possibility of delays.

To ensure health care access is not disrupted, we respectfully ask that you preserve the continuous zero-premium coverage provision included in the Ways & Means bill and expand this protection to include the cost-sharing reductions under the Energy & Commerce Committee's

jurisdiction. This provision is essential to genuinely fulfilling the promise of permanently closing the Medicaid coverage gap.

Thank you for your strong leadership and commitment to health equity during this unique moment in history. We stand ready to assist you in getting this landmark policy to President Biden's desk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lloyd Doggett", with a stylized, cursive script.

Lloyd Doggett

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.

Colin Allred

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.

Carolyn Bourdeaux

Joaquin Castro

Emanuel Cleaver, II

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